



The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Navajo Council approves, adopts position of Navajo Nation relative to Indian Reservation Roads Program

Funding from IRR significantly decreased in recent years from 76 percent to 28 percent in 2008

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Intergovernmental Relations Committee of the 21st Navajo Nation Council met for a regular meeting approving and adopting the position of the Navajo Nation relative to funding received from the Indian Reservation Roads (IRR) Program on Jan. 4.

Legislation No. 0774-09, sponsored by Sampson Begay, chairman of the Council's Transportation and Community Development Committee, states, "The Navajo Nation finds that the health and welfare of Navajo and other persons within the Navajo Nation are significantly and desperately impacted by the historic decreases in Indian Reservation Roads program funding to the Navajo Nation and other Indian tribes with land bases in excess of 30,000 square miles."

It was reported by Begay that the Indian Reservation Roads Program was created for Indian tribes, but its distribution is not fair and tribes cannot rely upon state and county road infrastructure or transportation facilities.

Funding from the IRR has had significant decreases in recent years from 76 percent to 28 percent in 2008. This destructive reduction in funding results from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Federal Highway Administration's inequitable and perhaps illegal implementation of the TTAM formula – a formula used to distribute funding amongst the tribes.

The Navajo Nation finds the needs of the Navajo Nation and other members of the Indian Reservation roads Coalition, consisting of elected tribal leaders from the Navajo Nation and other similarly situated Indian tribes are not advocated for by the National Congress of American Indian (NCAI), whose positions favor Indian tribes with land bases of 30,000 square-miles and less.

It was noted that not all tribes are part of the NCAI and the organization cannot speak for all the tribes, particularly on this critical issue of roads funding.

With the approval of the position, the chairperson of the Transportation and Community Development Committee can continue working with the Indian Reservation Roads Coalition to obtain appropriate amendments to the SAFETEA-LU reauthorization bill in order to provide adequate advocacy for the needs of the Navajo Nation.

The chairperson is now authorized to advocate with the U.S. Congress, the federal government, state and local governments for increased Indian Reservation Roads program funding to the Navajo Nation and other Indian tribes with land bases in excess of 30,000 square-miles, both separately on behalf of the Navajo Nation and in conjunction with the Indian Reservation Roads Coalition.

Larry Echo Hawk, assistant secretary of Indian Affairs, will be notified of the Navajo Nation's position.

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